

TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

# JOSE SANTAMARÍA

## Bard



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March 11 - June 7, 2020

Lab 3

*Bard* is a multi-channel sound installation composed of sounds from rivers in the department of Antioquia, Colombia, as processed by the artist. A part of Jose Santamaría's search lies in recognizing and calling attention to the act of listening from a reflective, attentive, and conscious position—it is about contemplating the subtle, ethereal, and delicate aspects of the environment, and revealing how what we perceive acoustically influences everyday living.

Since time immemorial, the river has been the fulcrum of the progress of civilizations. The development of society without rivers as a source of life, or a channel of communication and trade, is unthinkable. *Bard* presents a piece of electronic music that evokes the ambient genre (music that may induce calm and introspection) through synthesis and field recording. That is why the artist takes the river to be a minstrel that with its incessant and reassuring singing presents itself as a transmitter of life: a bard that provides calm, tranquility, and well-being.

*Bard* locates the river as the bearer of a unique creative substance: it recognizes water; understands it as a vital element that resonates, transcends man, and is at the same time the main component of all living organisms and the central axis of biological processes. On the other hand, it is a substance that tells a story that touches every human being, moves them with its warm and singsong voice, an idea that the artist equates with the creative process and with melody: "... because that is the primary purpose of music conceived of as art: to be an instrument that changes people's emotional state and takes them to other worlds, other sensations."

No drop of water sounds quite like another; no river rumbles the same as another because each one resounds according to its bed, the type of sediment it transports, the amount of water it moves, the vegetation that lies along it, and

the geography in which it is located; it is even set apart by the animals that drink or live within it. In the same way that it is impossible to compare the sound of the monsoon (flooding and torrential rains) to the rainfall of regions where hardly a drop descends, neither is it possible to compare a river that travels through flat and arid lands with one that descends from the summit of a mountain or one that is sinuous and gravelly.

It is therefore not possible to compare the sound of the Arma River with that of the Buey River, although both are related and meet a few kilometers before flowing into the Cauca River. The tranquility of the former, with its imperturbable, rocky flow through the valley is different from the exuberance with which the Buey descends from its source in the heights of Montebello. Thus, in similar geographical conditions, both rivers lead very different lives that decide to join to reach the Cauca.

*Bard* is a sound piece in which digital arts serve as a resource to radiate, somehow, the beauty that nature itself possesses while representing a microcosm that generates ecological awareness. The artist extracted textures and timbres from the sound of the rivers, which he reduced to a limited sound range in a work of synthesis that led to its maximum expression through a technique refined over more than 20 years of professional experience in electronic music. In this manner, he developed a work that delves, from a somewhat less "noisy" or thunderous perspective, into the first precept of electronic music that finds musicality in apparently non-musical sounds.

The installation consists of four looped instrumental pieces with an approximate total duration of 22 minutes over a multi-channel system. An environment conducive to attentive listening allows visitors to access a deep sound experience and invites them to reflect on rivers as a source of life and to think about the ecology that underpins them.

The rivers that Santamaría visited and recorded from for the design and composition of *Bard* were Buey, Piedras, Poblano, Santa Elena Brook, San Juan-El Aguacate Brook, Concepción, Matasano Brook, Nus, Negro, Tenche, Guadalupe, Medellín, Grande, Chico, Morales Brook, Porce, Bizcocho, Guatapé, Arma, North Samaná, San Juan, Cauca, Urrao, Penderisco, and Claro.

## **Jose Santamaría**

With over 20 years of professional experience and 30 published albums, Jose Santamaría (Medellín, 1979) has developed a body of work that links music, digital art, and the free culture movement. His project *[neuma]* is a combination of ambient, IDM (Intelligent Dance Music), and minimalist music. Although most of his explorations are loaded with textures and delicate sounds, he does not forget his electro-acoustic origins and adds noise or digital errors. He is currently part of the *Danta* project, in addition to his two solo projects *[neuma]* and *Dijon Triathlon*.



Photo: courtesy of the artist

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